

This Old House

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**GARDEN
FOUNTAINS
FOR EVERY
YARD**
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Simple summer upgrades

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PHOTOS: JEFFREY M. SMITH / GETTY IMAGES; JEFFREY M. SMITH / GETTY IMAGES

THE OLD HOUSE MAGAZINE
THE 100 MOST INTERESTING AUGUST 2015

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COTTAGE



On the cover



Cover Photography: MAEL LINDBERG
Styling: JILL GREENGLASS

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—from the August 2014 issue of *This Old House*



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Letter FROM THIS OLD HOUSE

The case of the disappearing patio

I had moved two tons of gravel before I came either to my senses or near total physical collapse. When your muscles begin to howl and you actually believe you hear them, it's hard to tell whether it's your brain offloading a smart warning or your back giving out. Either way, it had been a long, hot day carrying 40 separate 50-pound bags of something called long-runners you gravel into the backyard for the pebble-stone patio we were building. I was done. Cooked. And so I lounged in a chair for a beat. I looked to my left and saw a small man with horns and wings. I looked to my right and saw a roaring lion.

I knew I was not hallucinating—yet. I'd picked up the geyser to use as decoration in the garden—much like the story in the beautiful backyard story "Garden Observations," on page 62—and with the hour-earned arrival of the gravel, they would finally find a proper place in the flower beds that surrounded it.

When I thought was also fixation came some days later, when I started to believe that the gravel, my gravel, was disappearing. Right there at the foot of the back steps where I'd labored to spread a 3- or 4-inch layer of the 5-inch stone. At first I'm sure I didn't notice—sort of like Ham flirty Egmont and the acrobatics in *The Causeway*. Soon, though, Edith the cartoon was up all the time. It felt like my work seemed to thin out. And then one day it was down to the landscape fabric. What was it all going? Was I mad, a Captain Quack in the making?

I looked around the yard and the lion was staring at me with jaws agape. And that's when I saw it. On the very back of the lion's tongue—much as it is a necessary right through the animal from whom it was more properly said to channel rainwater away from a building—was a brown pebble.

"Aha!" I said, now knowing where my stone was going. "The lion was eating it!" And with that I heard my wife, who'd come outside with our 3-year-old to play in the room, say, "Why are you talking to yourself?"

"Sawana's eating my pebbles," I said, and now I know what! She gave me that look, the one that said I had indeed gone mad. And as she did, my son banged into me as he picked up a scoop of gravel at my feet with his purple plastic shovel and wandered over to dump them into the lion's mouth. I heard the mauling clatter of the pebbles speed through the statue and over the other side to a crash of noise. "Pebbles the lion, Daddy," my son said. I smiled, looked behind the lion and there, in a pile among a tangle of dry leaves, were a couple of bags' worth of noise. Realized that I was still sane, I bent to grab a handful of the stuff. I knew the howl I heard that time was most definitely my back.

Scott O'Connell
SCOTT O'CONNELL, EDITOR
scott@thisoldhouse.com



The editor, looking back and sharing ideas with his grandkids in the garden.

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joys, and gripes
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• Include your full name, address and phone number. Published letters are edited for clarity and length.

PRACTICAL BEAUTY appeals to *This Old House* readers, as evidenced by our in-box this month. Here, words from the wise on our June 2015 outdoor getaways piece, successful tips from Norm, hardwood decking, and more. And not one but two reader projects suitable for gardeners!

Pest-free getaways

After your June 2015 issue featured more wonderful outdoor living spaces ("Great Outdoor Getaways"), I had to write. They all look very beautiful, and they're full of ideas. However, if you share outdoor living spaces with mosquitoes, forget anything without screens! We have had a deck for years but unfortunately can use it only in early spring and after the first frost in fall. In summer, we get bothered by those bloodsucking pests, and nothing but screens will keep them at bay. If I have a deck featuring more three-season-type rooms?

—KIM LUK, CHICAGO, ILL.

THE EDITORS REPLY: We're sure to revisit screens and three-season rooms in future issues, Ken, but as the summer you can find previous TOH articles and ideas on that topic—plus some shorter-lasting ideas to try—at theoldhouse.com/jun2015.

Finish tips from Norm

I've been refinishing furniture, usually antique, for over 90 years. I recently purchased a decrepit old maple desk and saw the Ask This Old House Q + A from TGH's master carpenter Norm Abram about veneer joints (June 2015). I was unfamiliar with this type of product and decided to try it. I was thrilled with the results. The material was so much easier to use, and the desk turned out beautifully. Thanks!

—SHIRLEY GLASS, CANTON, OHIO

Ipe caveat

Regarding "All About Hardwood Decking" in the June 2015 issue, I've used ipe decking over the past 15 years on a number of projects and always had excellent results while living in a coastal environment. But once I moved to Nevada, with its arid desert climate, and started using ipe for several different projects, I found it to be

poor to shabby. After about six months, every plank shrunk across its width by 80 to 15 percent, causing a noticeable separation between boards.

I would caution consumers to consider their climate before assuming the inherent stability of ipe and other hardwood decking.

As a lifelong woodworker, I thank you for all the informative articles you publish each month in your magazine.

—JOHN MARROW, EYE, MASS.

Safer passage

The finished-up porch (Home Solutions, June 2015) could do with one more improvement: I would have also put in a new screen door, with the hinge on the left. This would put persons exiting or entering nose to face with the steps. It may seem like a small point, but for a person with mobility problems, it could prove a less-annoyed inconvenience and greater safety.

—RAY HILL, MICHIGAN, WIS.

It pays to save TOH issues

We still have the original looks on all the doors in our 1934 home, and we use the old skeleton keys to unlock those doors. A while back, our daughter lost

Rack 'em

—SARAH ANDELL, BETHLEHEM, PENNSYLVANIA

We tied up our messy porch with your bookstand project (left) and are thrilled with the results. It is a modified version, with 30 balusters instead of eight, but perfectly fits in our fireplace alcove. (Good for muddy gardening claps. See findthehow-to-at-theoldhouse.com/jun2015.)



one of the two original skeleton keys we use for an entry door, and we needed to replace it ASAP.

Luckily, I remembered there was a previous TOH story about making a replacement key (Ask This Old House, March 2014, photo below). Sitting through my back issues, I found the article I needed, with all the information to make a new key. I purchased blank skeleton keys online, and, following the instructions to the letter, I was able to make new keys (filing carefully) and also clean out the lock so that it works

better than ever. Thanks, TGH! I saw your old issues and you saved the day!

—CAROLYN HERRICK, KY.

THE EDITORS REPLY: Glad to help, Don. And if anybody missed that issue, you can find the skeleton key how-to at theoldhouse.com/jun2015.

Stories and inspiration

I got a bunch of decorating and home-design magazines, but TOH editor Scott Ouellette's is the only editor's letter I read. It's a story in itself and shows his agreement with the rest of us. Most magazines waste that page on a summary of the issue.

This *Old House* provides lots of great ideas. Some of what you feature is beyond my skill set, but who knows? I may learn to handle some power tools instead of just a paintbrush. Thanks for all the inspiration!

—MARC CAMPBELL, EYE, MASS.

Correction

In the June 2015 TOH Editors' Picks, the website for finding Toronto A/C-free Mosquito Bait & Kill should have been baekill.com, not termite.com. Our apologies for the error.

READER OF THE MONTH

Sewed-up planter

—ANNE HODGE, BANGOR, ME.

I save your idea for a planter made from an antique sewing-machine base (Home Solutions, April 2015, at right). We had one from my mother's barn. My wonderful husband Mike used screw wood and yellow paint to make the box. Spent about \$40 including the plants. Thanks for the great idea!



Photo: Christine Kasper

Checklist

AUGUST 2013

Easy ways to improve your home right now

6 FAST FIXES

❑ **Stop late-season plant sales.** Find nurseries for late summer deals to fill in any holes in beds and borders.



❑ **Stay safe in storms.** Trim branches hanging over your roof or near windows to help avoid costly storm damage.

❑ **Help out your freezer.** A full freezer will keep food cold longer in case of a power outage. Fill any gaps with a couple pillows or a couple bags of rice or a milk jug filled with water.

❑ **Perk up pillows.** Set out cushions direct sun for a few hours. Flipping halfway through to help them plump up evenly on interior or exterior—if it all allergy causing dust mites too.

❑ **Check leaks.** Inspect for loose parts and rotting wood, repair as needed. Cut back encroaching greenery which can spread wood decay.

❑ **Keep AC drain lines clear.** Prevent algae buildup by pouring 1/4 cup of bleach down the recess pipe. After 30 minutes flush with a gallon of water.

✓ Beach-proof your washing machine

Sandy laundry won't just damage other garments in your load—it can also clog the machine if it builds up in the drain hose. To keep the summer necessities but prevent future headaches, shake out towels and suits before to using them in the wash. Afterward, wipe around the rim of your washer and gasket with a wet paper towel to pick up any lingering grains.



TOH TIP

❑ Clean up the dehumidifier

Hot, humid summer days will have your dehumidifier working overtime, but a quick cleaning can keep things running smoothly. After unplugging the unit, empty the water tank and wash it with water and dish soap to prevent mold and mildew. Vacuum dust and debris from the vent holes and the exhaust grill to maintain proper airflow.

❑ Outwit prowlers

Finally taking that summer trip? Protect your house with these low-cost tricks: 1. Place wood dowels cut to length to fill snugly in the bottom track of sliding doors so that they can't be pried open. 2. Cover garage windows with opaque film so that it's not obvious when your car is gone. 3. Hook off an outdoor media vacation chatter until you return, to avoid fire-arms about your empty house.



❑ Check your trees

The invasive Asian longhorned beetle has killed more than 100,000 birch, ash, and alder trees in the U.S., so take the time now to look for warning signs in your backyard. Watch for faded branches, thin, saw holes in bark, or shavings in bark, and reporting damage to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. AerialBioscience can help with safe tree removal. Go to www.aerialbioscience.com for more information.



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Edited by Michelle Branner

INSIDE WOOD FINISHES YARD CARE COOKING TIPS OUTDOOR LIVING MORE



Leftover-tile table

In a moment of time, the project should be as easy as the 10/10. Take this outdoor table. All you need is a few extra tiles, a folding luggage rack, plywood, and a length of molding. To create our tabletop, we laid out tiles, then cut the plywood to size. Adhesive mat (Simple Mat, \$22; homedepot.com) quickly set the tile, which we then grouted. We added molding for a tray-like rim and cut out where it meets the tile. Screwing the top to the luggage rack from below adds stability. Blue paint binds it together. The result: a perfect spot to relax—and plenty of weekend left to enjoy.

Photo: "Visual Blog" (table; tile: \$1.57 each; hardware: \$10)



Fix a stain mistake

Applying wood stain can be tricky, but don't reach for the paint can just yet. Here, three ways to remedy a stain job gone wrong. —KATELIN HILL

GOOP 1: The color isn't right.
Some dinks are so big, though, that you'll need to sand. Take out the Minwax 5 PolyShed as a total polyurethane that lets you change the tone by adding, say, brown, to balance it out. It's always best to build your color gradually—the less the pigments you can do to go lighter.

GOOP 2: It's streaky.
First, strip as much of the color as possible. If you're using an oil-based stain, scrub the surface, where it's still wet, with a Scotch-Brite pad and mineral turpentine. For water-based stains, use a lacquer thinner. Scrub out the streaks, then reapply the stain liberally. Wipe off the excess with a rag immediately.

GOOP 3: It's splintery.
Some fine spaces contain pockets of sap, which cause the wood to splinter. Use a utility knife to strip off what you can (as described above), then seal the wood with a water-based Sealer. Then seal the wood with the sealer and wipe it off. Let it dry for 2 hours. Then switch to a 100 percent pigmented stain, such as Varathane. (Don't sweat a re-sit of dye and pigment.) Wipe away as needed to even out the difference in color.

Tools and tips for tackling weeds

You've fought the heat with regular watering only to find stubborn weeds flourishing. Extract the intruders with this trio of targeted tools.

—SAL RABKIN



FOR FLOWER BEDS: FINGER WEEDEE

The new tool fits over your pointer finger and grips where larger weedeers can't. It's perfect for detail work in flower beds. But don't go overboard. Disturbing the soil too much brings new weed seeds to the surface. \$5. thefingerweeder.com

FOR WEDGE BEDS: LONG-HANDLED LOOP WEEDEE

Reach weeds between your legs—without 2-in. 1-foot-long handle and sharp steel loop that lets you extract small weeds at their roots in deep soil. Bonus: You can use the cultivator to boost densely planted beds back to spring. \$40. gardenweede.com

FOR YOUR LAWN: TAPROOT HAND WEEDEE

Mow over weeds don't remove their roots. The distinct band of this weeder acts as a fulcrum, making it easier to dig around and pull out the legions of dandelions, chickweed, and plantain. Don't forget to fertilize. A healthy crop of dandelion gives weeds less of a chance. \$5. lakers.com



WHY YOUR COOLING & HEATING SYSTEM IS LIKE A 40-FOOT LONG HOT DOG.

It wouldn't make sense if you ordered a foot-long dog and were forced to pay for a 40-footer. But that's exactly how standard HVAC works. You fork over money to cool and heat rooms you aren't using. Mitsubishi Electric offers a better way. With individual room temperature control, no new ductwork and lower energy bills. Hot dog.

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Genius grilling hacks

Show everyone who's the master of the grill with clever shortcuts that use items you may already have on hand. Here, six ideas for your next cookout. —A.H.



▶ Hardware-cloth grill basket
When vegetables aren't cut into small pieces, they can slip through the grate. Try cooking them in a mesh basket made from a scrap of stainless-steel wire cloth. Fold in half a piece large enough to hold the food, then fold over the edges to close it up on two sides like an envelope. Clean with warm water and a few drops of mild dish-detergent. Grill with the end open so that you can pour the vapors out while they're still hot.

▶ Speedy skewered sausage
Rather than throwing sausage on the grill and waiting for their centers to cook or heat through, thread each end lengthwise with a flat metal skewer. This not only makes turning easier, it also helps reduce cooking time because the metal conducts heat.

▶ Brick-flattened chicken
Take a cut from the breasts and prepare the Tyson specialty known as a flat chicken, or chicken under a brick. Wrap a clay brick in foil and place it on top of a butterflied whole chicken. Since this creates an even cooking surface, the chicken comes out juicier and crispier.

▶ Paper-egg carton firestarter
When you're getting ready to grill, it can take a little nursing to get the fire going. For a simple shortcut, peak an empty paper egg carton with charcoal briquettes. Set the whole thing in the grill, pile more charcoal on top, then light the center. By the time the charcoal burns away, the coals will have caught.

▶ Cedar 1x4-grilled salmon
Salmon always tastes better side platters. But cedar planks can go for as much as \$4 for a single-use piece. In cookware stores, instead buy an untreated cedar 1x4 at the home center, cut it down to roughly 10-inch pieces, and sand well to create a clean surface. Soak in water for about 30 minutes before cooking.

▶ Onion grill cleaner
When the coals are still hot, use a long-handled fork to rub half of a large onion cut side down over the grill grate. The onion's oils will help to loosen the debris.

▶ MORE BBQ SHORTCUTS
For additional grilling hacks, go to thislifestyle.com/mag2015

Easy DIY centerpiece

You can't get much lower maintenance than this. Fill colorful empty tins with an array of succulents, such as aloe, zebra plant, sedum, and cactus. Because they thrive in direct sun, you can leave them outside all summer, provided they have good drainage. To get started, drill small holes in the bottom of clean cans and fill with a fast-draining cactus-and-succulent-planting mix. Put up the plants and top with decorative gravel. Grouped together, they make a striking and fuss-free display—no green thumb required. —M. DUNCAN



PHOTO: COURTESY OF OSCAR MAYER

EXPERT TIP

TURN ON THE FAN
When used consistently, fans can reduce the need for air-conditioning by as much as 30 percent, depending on where you live. They can make you feel 3 to 8 degrees cooler by blowing hot air away from your body. That means you can raise the temperature on your AC several degrees and still feel comfortable.

—KING STEPHAN, PH.D.
SENIOR SCIENTIST, LAWRENCE
BERNLEY NATIONAL LABORATORY
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It's Not Food. It's Oscar Mayer.

Five design goofs to avoid

Impulsive upholstery, wall paint that's too bright—we've all made a mistake or two when it comes to making our living spaces. Here, design pros share five design faux pas after getting and offering us how to get them right—*at minimum*.

1

BUYING EVERYTHING FROM ONE STORE

Perusing your favorite catalog, it's tempting to buy everything you see. "Stores make it easy by setting up vignettes that create a mood," says Robin Colton, an Austin, Texas-based interior designer. The upside: Everything goes together. The downside: Matchy-matchy decor can feel a little soulless. "A mix of styles, scale, and proportions key to a room's feeling layered and comfortable. You want a space that's uniquely you and not the image a store is selling," says Colton.

2

LINING THE WALLS WITH YOUR FURNITURE

You'd think pushing everything against the walls would make your room seem bigger and more open, but putting too much space between pieces makes a room feel uninviting. "When you move things away from the wall, you create intimate spaces that allow for interaction and comfort," says Colton. If your living room is on the small side, anchor some of the furniture on just the wall—for example, the sofa and end tables—as a solution.



3

DESIGNING FOR THE LIFESTYLE YOU WANT VS. THE ONE YOU HAVE

See that generic white sofa looks appealing in the showroom, but if you've got kids or pets or you just like to eat chips and salsa instead of the TV, think twice. "You're not going to change human behavior, so you need to be realistic about mess and clutter," says Nicole Boneman, a Los Angeles-based interior designer. With seating, opt for stain-resistant fabrics/outdoor fabric. Another problem: not enough storage. Many people fill an overstuffed sofa with throw pillows or board games. Look for storage ottomans or pieces with doors to keep clutter out of sight.

4

TOO-SMALL RUGS

Besides being a cozy cushion for your feet at the end of a long day, a rug helps define a space and add color, texture, and pattern. If a rug is too small, it looks skimpy. "Either all of your furnishings should be completely on the rug, or the front two legs of sofas or chairs should sit on it," says Colton. Since larger rugs can be pricey, one solution is to lay two identical smaller ones side by side. A carpet repair pro can even stitch them together for a more permanent fix.

5

SELECTING PAINT COLORS BEFORE FURNITURE

Flip through any paint deck and you'll see a dizzying number of shades. It's much harder to find the right home furnishings, drapes, and rugs, which is why Colton recommends making paint the last thing you choose for a space. To preview a color, paint adhesive-backed sample boards (Sherwin-Williams boards, \$5.99 for a two-pack, mywallswatch.com for retailers); they can be repositioned, so you can move them around the room at different times of day. One more tip: Don't obsess on a shade to match a paint color from another company. Says Colton, "It's a terrific way to get a color that's not what you were expecting."



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A cheery laundry room for \$420

Bold stripes, DIY butcher block, and thoughtful details turn a dingy utility room into a space with function and flair



BEFORE The room simply looked like storage with no styling supplies out on the washer and dryer and there was no place to fold or sort clothes.

AFTER It's a brighter and more productive laundry room with simple storage space. Deep hooks to organize clothes keep supplies out of sight but within easy reach.

DOING LAUNDRY MAY BE A CHORE, but that doesn't mean the laundry room has to be the most boring room in the house. Just ask Katie and Matthew Harris, who recently renovated their 1992 home in Merritt Island, Florida. Over the past two-plus decades, the laundry room had acquired layers of dingy, dated decor. First taking on a job, they had to remove vinyl flooring to install warm bamboo planks. Then they peeled back two layers of wallpaper only to discover a mold problem. After scrubbing the walls with bleach and applying a coat of mold-killing primer, they hung beadboard wallpaper on the bottom half of the walls and painted crisp navy stripes on the upper half, adding a chair rail to conceal the transition. Katie wanted a butcher-block counter, but a slab long enough to fit over the washer and dryer was not in the budget. Matt's relief? Edge-glued cedar 1-in. boards into a plywood base, with a 3-in. thermal-edge and rounded finish on the front. Open shelves, storage baskets, and a spunky ironing board provide the finishing touches to a space that's no longer an eyesore. "I used to hate going to there," Katie says. "Now I long for this room in the house!" —BY LIZ HALL

THE PROJECT TALLY

Tore up three layers of peel-and-stick vinyl tiles and installed bamboo flooring... **\$130**

Covered the walls with mold-killing primer, painted the upper portion white and navy... **\$60**

Hung beadboard wallpaper and nipped the walls with decorative chair rail... **\$60**

Removed an awkwardly placed sink, faucet, and a rearranged the walls and installed three open shelves with wood brackets... **\$200**

Built a faux butcher-block countertop by gluing plywood and cedar 1-in. and sealed it with polyurethane... **\$50**

Added storage baskets, a colorful ironing board cover and a throw rug... **\$20**

TOTAL... **\$420**

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Bigger and better

Two serious cooks with salvaging skills and DIY smarts expand on the charms of a 285-year-old house ■ BY DEBORAH SALSWY ■ PHOTOGRAPHS BY ERIC SOTH

TACKLING A HOUSE as old as parents George Washington requests a willing suspension of common sense. But Matthew and Ann Cecil weren't fazed by the floor-cupper they bought in Sharon, Massachusetts, even though its kitchen had last seen a carpenter maybe 40 years ago. "My parents and Ann's dad always had some project going," Matthew says of the couple's lifelong exposure to home improvements. Still, a sweeping redolent the 1790 house took a little longer than most DIY projects. "There wasn't a piece of wood that didn't have to be sanded or picked up," Matthew says.

Working with a carpenter friend, Marty Barrett, and a cabinet and countertop company, the Cecils turned the barebones room into a kitchen suited for enthusiastic cooks with two young children. Only one thing gave them pause: uncovering a massive, intruded cast-iron sink into place with a house jack that could move it just 8 inches at a time. "We treated it with kid gloves for a while," Matthew says of the sink's strange porcelain finish. "But you can't really beat it, and anyway, it should look old." That's why they like it, after all.

BEFORE The new kitchen is built on top of a space-hogging fireplace and a breakfast table.

AFTER Rebuilt using original beams and floorboards, it's now finished with Shaker-style cabinets and enameled counter tops. Colored-tile countertops. (Matthew)



BEFORE



• before • after:
kitchen

Custom replacement windows, added during the whole-house remodel, evoke period style in a seating spot just to the right of the new kitchen. *Paint: Benjamin Moore's Cornflower Blue; Windows: Andersen; Dining Chair: G. Albert*



The new working island doubles as a breakfast spot for the kids. *See How England Remodeled It: Salvage Journal; Dining Chairs: Capital City Cabinet*

after

Wider and shorter to hold 340 square feet, the space is now a high-functioning family-size kitchen.

before

The 252-square-foot breakfast room was the starting point for the new cook space.



PHOTO: LANCE PERKINS

The DIY light fixture over the island recycles the tin captured in a jar.



The homeowners salvaged old plumbing to make the island tap and finished the floor by gluing together original floorboards from other rooms. The second area is especially helpful at holiday time. *Over, refrigerator and microwave: KitchenAid*



homeowner tip MATTHEW COLE, SEARCH BEGG

"We turned a pair of mason jars into pendant lights with inexpensive conversion kits from the home center."



The old kitchen, a 10-foot-by-12-foot white gallery was a new living space plan. Living and dining spaces. New oak ceiling beams were stained throughout and stained to match originals in the new kitchen. *Green: Sherwin-Williams*



A custom wine rack was a cabinet cut along the route to the dining area.

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Open and accessible

Reworking a cramped master bath using the principles of universal design allows everyone room to move

BY MEGAN BAKER • PHOTOGRAPH BY DEBORAH WHITMAN/ARTISTBYDEBORAH



BEFORE

BEFORE The bulky corner tub and vanity cabinet were among the master bath's obstacles.

AFTER A walk-in shower that is open at both ends makes for smooth movement and exits. The new vanities are open underneath.

PHOTO: M. BAKER

NO MATTER THE SIZE, a bathroom is useless if it's unworkable. That's what Lena and Ted Swanson found when they bought their 1980s home, in Witherborn, South Carolina, shortly after Ted was diagnosed with ALS, a degenerative neuromuscular disease. Knowing that they'd need to rethink the space to make it easier for Ted to navigate in the years progressed, the couple sought the help of Charleston designer Sandra Gayford. With Ted's needs in mind, Gayford gutted the space—including a massive walk-in closet—to set the stage for an open floor plan that would accommodate a shower chair and a treadmill. The counterpart: a spacious, curbless shower with four wall-mounted sprays, long grab bars, a rainfall, and an adjustable lift-height hand shower, plus openings at both ends for easy entrance and egress. One of the two new vanities provides clearance for a wheelchair, and a wall of built-in organizers holds toiletries and equipment. With its expanse of clerestory windows and crisp white and blue walls, the room feels warm, not sterile. "We spend a lot of time in there, so we love the windows," says Lena. "It's so nice to be able to look out and see the sky."

A loading track guides Ted's lift system, which runs from the bath into the bedrooms.



High-tech shower controls show water temperature preferences for comfort and safety. Shower controls: rainforest, no/grab bar, shower.



before

A walk-in closet and a giant corner tub left little room for a wheelchair to maneuver.



Circulatory windows in the shower let in plenty of natural light without sacrificing privacy or requiring cumbersome blinds or curtains. Two large glass panels on the interior shower wall show light all the way through the room.



Large, rectangular floor tiles are wheel friendly. Smaller border tiles and irregular shapes provide plenty of ground for mobile carts.

after

Swapping the large closet for two smaller ones, plus a built-in cabinet, freed floor space to create an easily navigable open layout.



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... ..



Tuscan outdoor room

A leaf-covered patio gets a romantic upgrade with vintage furniture, mood lighting, and a party-ready trestle table

BY KATHY D. HILL, EWANS • PHOTOGRAPHY: ERIC AGOSTINI

ALFRESCO MEALS, twinkly lights, and a garden—Italians know how to do summer nights right. But living in *dolce vita* can be years far less than a tickle in Spain. Take this patio, which designer and *DOYer* Member Christy Lee, the style director at *Southern Living* magazine, put together in back of a house in Birmingham, Alabama. Using an evergreen pergola from the movie *Under the Tuscan Sun* as a base, she added a simple iron structure and let wisteria grow wild. A long copper-wrapped wicker table edged by a medley of metal and wicker chairs begs guests to sit and stay awhile under the glow of lights she fashioned from pails and glass jars. Wicker-wrapped bottles act as vases and wine decanters, a fireplace supplies needed warmth on cooler evenings.

To bring the idyllic look to your own backyard, read on.

river-rock tile

The homeowners got a custom fireplace in addition to the usual price by buying mesh-backed stone tile in large diamond shapes and having a mason pour concrete in between. \$30 per square foot. homedepot.com

demijohn

An over-the-top vessel is an eye-catching holder for leafy greens—especially when they're being nature further into the space. \$20; wayfair.com

outdoor hearth

The homeowners' aluminum smoker chimney fireplace emits a glow from the copper-topped table. The wood-burning stove, which offers a rustic look, is \$229; homedepot.com

wine jugs

Entertaining enough to have long and wicker wrapped but not to provide leakage. We found these on eBay.com for \$14 and \$26, respectively.

jar lighting

Outdoor cordless and black paint turn pails and olive jars into rustic pendant lights. Each takes and 26-watt halogen bulb. paperbellandco.com

tub chair

The homeowners' tub chair is a lot of character, it includes 1950s-style armrests like this one, which look even better after a few drinks. \$220 for a pair. Target.com

climbing vines

Grappes grow from climbing vines, but they provide the same shade and look that is good. Search online at landscape.com to find the best type for your area.

leafy plants

Upholster a few like the homeowners' unique-looking outdoor fabric that can take the sun just bring it indoors if the forecast calls for rain. \$30 per yard. outdoorfabric.com

DIY

copper-topped table

Christy Lee's handy father built the 17-foot trestle table, which is wrapped in leather paper. The table is made of wicker, we used contact cement and copper nails to attach a 30-gauge copper roll to finished up a project. The table legs painted the same hue as the homeowners' table. Christy Lee's father built a French-style trestle table. 36-by-40 inch copper roll, \$229 and 1 pound of copper nails, \$24. hardware.com



THIS OLD HOUSE

WITH KATHY AND BOB

THREE QUESTIONS FOR

Norm Abram

This Old House Master Carpenter since 1979

You've been with the show for all of its 35 years.

How has residential building changed in that time?

I think it's changed for the better. The development of new, innovative building materials and energy-efficient heating and cooling systems and appliances gives us the opportunity to renovate and build homes that are stronger, smarter, and easier to run.

Are there any trends in home-building today that you're particularly excited about? Maybe it's just my age, but I'm very excited about the whole concept of universal design.

Having dealt with aging parents, the idea of downsizing our personal life has been on my mind recently. The Essex project we did recently (TOH TV Season 33) came at just the right time, and it's influencing our decisions in a very positive way.

What's the biggest mistake first-time remodelers make? And how can they avoid it? Thinking only in terms of how they want the project to look in the end. They should first ensure that the house is solid and weather-tight before improving the living spaces to avoid much bigger—and more expensive—problems down the road. It doesn't do any good to have a beautiful kitchen in a house that has structural or mechanical problems.



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Glass cabinet knobs

Delicate crystalline hardware brings a sense of history—and often a welcome dose of color—to drawers and doors

BY MEGAN BAKER • PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARK LUNN

AS HARDWARE GOES, there's nothing more gem-like than glass knobs. A product of the 19th-century industrial boom, glassknobs were both beautiful and easy to mass-produce, making them popular among homeowners and woodworkers alike. Since then, they've graced drawers and doors through a range of architectural eras and decorative sensibilities, from ornate Victorian Eclecticism to sleekly geometric Art Deco. Most of the originals were clear, but over time they grew more and more colorful—and these days the jewel-like fixtures come in a number of hues. Here, 15 of our favorite finds.

in the clear

FIG 1
Size: 2 1/2 inches across
Highlights: Beveled edges create complex light play
To buy: Clear Glass Knob \$6, jacob.com

pressed flowers

HOUSE OF ANTIQUE HARDWARE
Size: 3 1/4 inches across
Highlights: This Empire-style knob offers plenty of light for large built-ins
To buy: Large Pressed Glass Drawer Knob With Flower Design \$8.75
houseofantiquehardware.com



fluted style

HOUSE OF ANTIQUE HARDWARE
Size: 1 1/2 inches across
Highlights: Antique beveled edges create warm, architectural light play
To buy: Small Fluted Glass Cabinet Knob \$4.95
houseofantiquehardware.com



frosted look

MFTY INC.
Size: 1 1/2 inches across
Highlights: Delicate etched design gives off a soft, ethereal glow
To buy: Glass Green Etched Knob \$22, mfty.com

deep blue

LOWE'S HOMEWARE
Size: 2 1/2 inches across

Highlights: The basic button-like caplet-like form is versatile enough to suit any style of decor. To buy: Cubitt's Antiques & Collectibles, \$16; procreation.com

pretty petals

DIYERHOME COLLECTION
Size: 2 1/2 inches across

Highlights: Pink Depression glass in a fluted shape has a soft romantic glow. To buy: Deep Knobs, \$9.99; diyerhomecollection.com

flower power

LOWE'S HOMEWARE
Size: 2 1/2 inches across

Highlights: Frosted glass tulips give a modern twist; petal pattern adds a touch of whimsy. To buy: EntryWorks Glass Knob, \$1.99; lowes.com

starburst

WORLD MARKET
Size: 2 1/2 inches across

Highlights: No less green glass is grander in form; round metal. To buy: Green Glass Knobs, \$9.99; forbes.worldmarket.com

crystal ball

THRESHOLD
Size: 1 1/2 inches across

Highlights: Flared base adds a touch of Hollywood Regency-style glamour. To buy: Crystal Faceted Knob, \$22; for four-target.com

bubbling up

LOWE'S HOMEWARE
Size: 1 1/4 inches across

Highlights: Green Depression glass with a smattering of irregular bubbles gives this knob a feeling of history. To buy: Vintage Stylized Green Bubble Glass Knob, \$4.99; homedepot.com

metal head

DIYERHOME COLLECTION
Size: 2 inches across

Highlights: Encased in clear glass, pewter metal gives knobs a strikingly unobtrusive look. To buy: Tangent Glass Knobs, \$18; diyerhome.com

totally hexed

LOWE'S HOMEWARE
Size: 2 1/2 inches across

Highlights: Mid-century glass helps this knob's bold geometric design. To buy: Antique Mid-Century Glass Knob, \$2.25; lowes.com

splashy

WICK'S MARKET
Size: 2 inches across

Highlights: A faceted glass and pairing bubbles impart a handmade look. To buy: Aqua Glass Bubble Knob, \$7.99; for two wicksmarket.com

mirror, mirror

DIYERHOME COLLECTION
Size: 1 1/2 inches across

Highlights: Translucent, mercury glass gets a update in modern pyramidal shape. To buy: Antique Silver Mercury Square Knob, \$2.99; diyerhomecollection.com

summer season

LOWE'S HOMEWARE
Size: 2 1/2 inches across

Highlights: A quintessential Victorian-era pattern is a lovely spring green. To buy: Vintage Collection Glass Round Knob, \$12; lowes.com

live mind

LOWE'S HOMEWARE
Size: 2 1/2 inches across

Highlights: A simple barrel knob channels Art Deco style. To buy: Glass Barrel Knob, \$2.29; lowes.com

squared away

HOUSE OF ANTIQUE HARDWARE
Size: 2 1/2 inches across

Highlights: A square knobby knob suggests Craftsman style. To buy: Square Glass Knob, \$4.99; houseofantiquehardware.com

geometric look

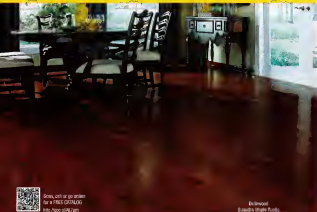
RESTORATION HARDWARE
Size: 2 1/2 inches across

Highlights: Its octagonal shape is the first of a series that makes this one a vintage classic. To buy: Traditional Violet Glass Knob, \$26; restorationhardware.com

TIP

Drilling drawer holes for new knobs? Position them slightly above vertical center—that way, when viewed from standing height, they'll appear perfectly in line.

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photoshop redo

Classing up a cottage

A timeworn beach bungalow gets charming and useful upgrades, from a larger second story to a more practical stoop

BY KATHRYN O'SHEA ENNIS • ILLUSTRATION BY GUYAUGER INC.



Craftsman-inspired tripartite knee brackets give the gables and awnings look.

"THIS HOUSE could definitely use a face-lift," says Stephanie Engel of the 1920s cottage she shares with her husband, Cristiano, in Santa Cruz, California. "We turned to local architect Eugene H. Selva for ideas."

"There've been so many weird additions over the years," Selva says, pointing to the third dormer and off-center front door. He would add living space to the 1,680-square-foot interior by changing the hip roof to a gable, increasing the usable space on the second story. "It's an expensive thing to do, but it adds value," Selva says. "Contracting the entry between two windows and installing four-over-one double-hung throughout belated the facade. Local artisan Ivan made the Engel's request for a porch moot, but a steel-style portico roof helps shield the existing landing."

"It looks really cute," says Engel. "And that open-air bedroom could use the extra space!" ■

WANT A PHOTOSHOP REDO?
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redo@theoldhouse.com

finishing touches

The formerly modified facade takes a style boost from these classic finds.



stain

A soft yellow/taupe makes the house's new cedar shingles look warm and welcoming and will take on a subtle patina with age. Olympic Olive Stain, Minwax, \$43 per gallon



window

An aluminum exterior helps this wood double-hung break the elements. The four-over-one double-hung has a simple cottage look. Minwax, \$345



window box

This sturdy PVC number shows the type up to the hilt. The window box is made of PVC and adds some lovely cheer. Hooks and Ladders, from \$15



entry set

This model is made of solid forged brass with a brushed metal finish. The set is a handcrafted secure House of Antique Hardware, \$460

curbside and communities where there is need and interest in walkability. "Done well, it makes people feel good about their neighborhood and gives a street a sense of place," says Nora Benish, a professor with UC Davis's University Urban Horticulture Institute. Some cities, such as Seattle, offer incentives to convert hellstrips into curbside-flaming plant gardens. In San Francisco, downtown look-alikes in a community where a block-long makeover in Southern California towns that attract visitors for replacing lawns, hellstrips qualify.

Ready to get planting? Hellstrips are usually part of the public right of way, so start by checking with your municipality about permits and restrictions. To preserve sight lines, plants typically need to stay under 3 feet tall and often 2 or more feet from driveways. There are also rules for a plant's proximity to signs, fire hydrants, and power lines. Trees generally need to stay below any power lines and to be linked up about 7 feet so they don't block views. Where hellstrips already exist, Benish recommends keeping plants at least 6 feet from the trunk, to avoid damaging major roots, and to consider using a raised planter that drains well and is filled with a mix of soil, compost, peat moss, and perlite.

The biggest issue, though, is the planting strip width. The narrower it is, the faster the soil drains out, and narrower like the 12-inch-wide plant-free "curbside strip" some cities require alongside parking spaces will no rainwater space. But even a 6-inch-wide strip can look good with kinks in the water and buried Southern, creeping succulents and San Francisco, violet in the cool and damp Northwest, or sweet woodruff for shade and "Autumn Joy" and anise for sun in the Northeast.

Hellstrip plants face some special issues. Where winter snow piles up, they need to withstand salt. The soil is often compacted and limited in depth by the sidewalk's base aggregate, so pick varieties that are unfussy about growing conditions. Plants that survive as annuals alone are recommended to keep maintenance low, and they should stay naturally compact without extensive pruning. Because these strips can be right above heated utilities, make sure to call 811 before digging.

But even the tiniest hellstrip gardens can have a big impact. "They contribute disproportionately to poor town's curb appeal," Hadden says. "They also beautify your crime neighborhood and make it more welcoming for people passing by in cars, on bikes, or on foot."

Bands of color

Check out these hellstrip designs for smart ways to use perennials, dwarf shrubs, and groundcovers.



▲ Water-wise

Once established, it's a low-maintenance mix of shrubs, flowering perennials, and grasses. Blue Chip butterfly bush needs little water. Red-tipped yucca, purple-flowered yucca, and purple-flowered yucca are perennial water-wise choices. A good for its color and low water needs.

► Low growers

Though hellstrips are small, they can hold a lot of plants. Purple Hebe, a low-growing shrub, is a good choice for its color and low water needs. Good choices for its color and low water needs. Good choices for its color and low water needs.



Top: Photo by J. L. L. / iStockphoto.com; Middle: Photo by J. L. L. / iStockphoto.com; Bottom: Photo by J. L. L. / iStockphoto.com

Hellstrip stalwarts

Not every plant is resilient enough for a streetside garden. Here are some bulletproof varieties that don't skimp on color.

1. BLUE FESCUE

(Festuca ovina)
This cool-season grass is a low-growing, spreading plant that reaches 12 inches tall. It has a blue-gray color and is drought-tolerant.

2. YARROW

(Achillea millefolium)
This cool-season grass is a low-growing, spreading plant that reaches 12 inches tall. It has a blue-gray color and is drought-tolerant.

3. MOONBEAM EUPHORAS

(Euphorbia corollata)
This cool-season grass is a low-growing, spreading plant that reaches 12 inches tall. It has a blue-gray color and is drought-tolerant.

4. SWEET WOODRUFF

(Asperula matronalis)
This cool-season grass is a low-growing, spreading plant that reaches 12 inches tall. It has a blue-gray color and is drought-tolerant.



4 Eclectic cottage style

This eclectic hellstrip has a mix of plants, including Sweet William, rose of sharon, and major dwarf lime green. The mix of colors and textures creates a vibrant, eclectic look.



4 Pattern play

A hellstrip garden with a mix of plants, including Japanese barberry, lavender, and pink. The mix of colors and textures creates a vibrant, eclectic look.

BUT THERE'S MORE!
Find out about more hellstrip ideas in the "Hellstrip" section of the "Curbside Gardening" book.

Three-tiered bath stand

A stand-alone piece with a trio of shelves provides a handsome platform for toiletries and such. BY THOMAS HAKER • PHOTOGRAPHY BY WENDELL T. WEBER

WHEN YOUR BATHROOM counter becomes overpopulated with lotions and potions, maybe even a candle or two, here's an attractive way to contain the clutter: a freestanding unit with open shelves. Often called an *armoire* because of its French origins, it's handy when mounted beside the tub or shower for keeping bath essentials within easy reach.

While many *armoires* are made of metal and glass, those made of wood can be at home in a bath as well. Two open shelves show a wood trapezoid the choice of looks—from the warmth of exposed grain to the coolness of a painted finish—and the fact that you can buy one or build it yourself.

Either way, be sure to choose materials that will stand up to a wet and humid environment. Avoid legs made with veneers or with capped components like MDF, which can absorb water and swell. A stand made with solid wood and waterproof finishes and covered with a water-resistant finish will provide useful storage in your bathroom for a long time to come.

Shown: Three-Tier Three-Shelf armoire/bathroom storage unit. 18 1/2" W x 35 1/2" D x 35 1/2" H. \$200. diyartandhome.com

MAKE ONE YOURSELF

For the details and materials you'll need, turn to the project on the next page or visit diyartandhome.com. diyartandhome.com



Photo: Courtesy of Thomas Haker, DIY.com. (Photo by Wendell T. Weber)

BUILD IT

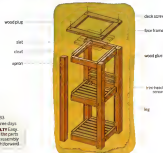
Chest or weired oak won't sponge up water—perfect for a bathroom

1) Cut and mark the pieces. Use a miter saw to cut the pieces to length: post the cut list at the bottom coming up 200.

2) Make the shelf frames. Glue and screw a cleat to each of the aprons pieces, flush along one edge with the apron center and between the ends of the cleat. Glue and clamp the other side apron to the ends of the cleats to form the frames for all three shelves, and create a notch at each corner to fit against a leg. When the glue dries, glue tabs to the cleats on two of the frames, using the spacers to maintain consistent gaps.

3) Attach the legs. Mark the locations for the bottom and middle shelves on the legs. Drive two legs on the table, apply glue to the notches on one shelf, stand it up between the legs at its marks, and clamp everything tight. Working from the underside of the shelf, drill a pilot hole through the cleat and into each leg; then drive a 1/2-in. x 3-in. x 1/2-in. screw into each pilot hole. Glue and screw the third shelf to the legs at its pair of marks. When the glue dries, attach the shelves to the other two legs in the same way.

4) Assemble the top shelf. Flip the top shelf frame upside down and attach it flush with the tops of the legs. Next, glue together the pieces to make the face frame, which covers the top of the legs and surrounds the slots. When the frame is dry, the apron corners with the corners of the legs. Use a combination square to mark the locations of the apron corners for the plugs through the frame and into the legs. Glue the frame to the legs and aprons, and drive in deck screws. Now glue the slats to the cleats. Space the slats evenly, but leave a gap between them and the frame. Glue wood plugs over the face frame's notches and drive them flush. Finish the piece with oil or wax.



GOIT 503

TIME Three days
DIFFICULTY Easy
Once all the parts are cut, assembly is straightforward.

BUY IT

Bamboo is easier on the wallet than painted wood or custom-crafted reclaimed wood

\$70

the basic model
This 30-inch high armoire with its bamboo frame and solid shelves can be used in the bathroom, bedroom, or living room. diyartandhome.com



\$199

the mild storage model
Painted in a light color, this armoire has two shelves, and handy pull-out shelf on the 30-inch high armoire. diyartandhome.com



\$200

the lantern model
This rustic 36-inch high stand made of reclaimed wood, includes an angle bracket for hanging. diyartandhome.com





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Revive a beat-up deck

Coat cracked and dried-out boards with sand-impregnated paint to bring them back to life BY ERIC HARTMAN • PHOTOGRAPHY LAURENCE



6661 \$425 for a 250-square-foot deck. Two days later sent. **DIFFICULTY** Moderate. The steps are simple but somewhat painstaking.

IF YOUR SHabby OLD DECK has become a source of shame, there's a fix other than replacing all the boards. Assuming they're not rotten or decayed and the structure is sound, deck boards can be revived. We used a thick, water-based paint with sand in it to create a sand-painting that extends the life of deck boards by filling cracks and forming a protective seal. The catch? Prepping the surface is a bit tedious, and you must follow all the directions to a T—or risk having the paint peel. Do you really need to sand and wash the deck after stripping it? Yes, you do. You also need a clear finisher, as the coating requires 48 hours to dry before taking on rain. That said, the transformation is dramatic. Follow along as *This Old House* senior technical editor Mark Powers walks you through each and every step. After all, there's still plenty of good deck weather to be had this summer.

Finish: Rust-Oleum Decking 250 Advanced Surface Coating, \$22 per gallon. Available here.

**DAY-TO-DAY
TIMELINE**

SATURDAY Strip, sand, and clean the deck (Steps 1–4)
SUNDAY Apply two coats of sealant (Steps 5–7)



stripper deck cleaner

TOOLS

oiling multibolt
for support
removing rot/deck
boards
deck driver
5-in 2 tool
wide-head-but
hammer
garden hose
garden pump
sprayer
goggles
rubber boots
rubber gloves
stiff bristled push
broom
pressure washer
sanding pole with
30-grit sandpaper
cable gun
putty knife
5-inch paint roller
with extension
handle
4-inch paint roller
paintbrush
cable d/c/driver
large mixing paddle

MATERIALS

2-inch deck screws
masking tape
pesticidal soap
dust mask
Wagner DeckSaver
Gel (1 gallon) every
100 square feet
Rust-Oleum Restore
Deck and Concrete
Cleaner
Rust-Oleum Restore
30X Advanced
Restoration Gel
1 gallon for every
400 square feet
solid color stain Gel
2 coats to match the
surrounding paint, for
vertical surfaces
polyurethane
paint bucket
Rust-Oleum Restore
5-inch roller covers
Rust-Oleum Restore
4-inch roller covers
1/2-inch 4-inch
roller covers
for applying solid
color stain
4-inch chip-brush to
back brush the finish
coat (optional)

1 Prep the deck

A) Fix the boards. Inspect your deck for rot. Remove any damaged deck boards and cut off the solid portion—all the way back to the center line of the nearest joist. Use deck screws to attach the new board. Then cut a piece of the decking to fill the gap, and screw it to the joists. Check the handrails and balusters, and replace any damaged sections. Use the 5-in 2 tool to remove the splinters, then nail rot/deck boards with the nail set and hammer, as shown.

B) Protect the surroundings. Tape plastic sheeting over the siding from the deck up to about waist height. Cover or remove anything beneath the deck as well. Use the garden hose to soak plants and shrubs around the deck so that they'll absorb less of the potentially harmful runoff during stripping and cleaning.



2 Remove the finish

A) Apply the stripper. Regardless of how discolored your deck boards may look—and even if they've never been stained—they need to be stripped for this product to stick. Fill the pump sprayer with the recommended stripper and siphon with a push/pull sprayer, including goggles and rubber boots and gloves. Working in 20-square-foot sections, saturate the deck boards and handrails.

B) Work in the strippers. Let the stripper stand for 15 minutes. Then use a push broom or brush with synthetic bristles to work the stripper into the coated areas. Watch your footing—it's slippery in rubber boots.

C) Remove it all. Install a 40° fan tip on the pressure washer and set it to spray between 2,500 and 2,800 psi for pressure-treated wood. Wearing your protective gear, walk from inside toward outside, using the corrugated strippers to push the stripper off the ends of the boards. Keep the tip about 6 inches from the wood surface, and repeat several times until the runoff changes from foamy to clear.



3 Sand the surface

A) Sand the deck. Once the wood has dried, don a dust mask and use the sanding pole and 30-grit paper to roughly sand the entire surface of the deck, including the handrail end balusters. Always sand with the grain. Sweep off any dust.

B) Test the surface. To check for any residual elements, pour a cupful or two of water on different surface areas—high traffic and low traffic, shady and sunny, exposed and covered, new and old. The water should soak into the wood quickly; unless that's a minute. If it beads up, you'll need to strip and sand those areas again, then retest the water test.



4 Clean the deck

A) Wash the deck. This may sound like overkill, but it's important to remove any remaining grime, dirt, and oils from the surface that could interfere with adhesion. Fill the pump sprayer with deck-cleaning detergent and the appropriate ratio of water, according to the directions. Spray the mixture on the deck and let it sit for 5 to 10 minutes. Then work it in with the push broom, as shown.

B) Hoses the deck. Use the pressure washer with its 40° tip to rinse the deck with plain water. Now let the deck dry overnight.



5 Prep for paint

A) Fill cracks. Once the wood is dry, fill any gouges, holes, and cracks deeper than 1/4 inch with a paintable acrylic caulk. Use a putty knife to scrape off the excess. Then allow the caulk to set until it skins over, probably 30 minutes.

B) Coat the balusters. Use a small roller or a brush to coat all the vertical surfaces with the solid color stain. If your deck requires more than one gallon, it's a good idea to combine equal parts from multiple cans to ensure the color is evenly mixed. Once the stain dries, look for any visible gaps or cracks. Fill them with caulk and restain them when the caulk is dry.

C) Cut in. Before coating the deck, use the paintbrush to work the stain into the gaps between deck boards, which will be hard to reach with the thick resurfacings paint.



6 Paint the field

A) Fill in the field. Use the coated drill/driver and a stout mixing paddle to thoroughly mix the resurfacings paint, blending batches if you have more than one. Working from the back corner, use a heavily saturated first-time roller cover and slight pressure to push a bead of the paint ahead of the roller into the surface cracks—in one direction only. Note: Using a thick nap roller will not work. Do not roll back and forth, as it will peel up the coating.

B) Break the film. The coating is so thick that it will ripen the gap between boards on most decks. Run the 5-in. tool just along the gap to break the film, setting the excess 6 in. up down along the edge. Allow the first coat to dry for 4 to 6 hours. When the surface is no longer tacky, start the second coat.

C) Cover problem areas. For cupped boards, use a small roller and go across the width of the board to apply the coating.



7 Apply the finish coat

A) Fill any cracks. Apply the finish coat in the same manner, covering all the flat surfaces. Take care to fill any visible issues and cracks in boards.

B) Smooth the finish. Optional: If you want a less textured finish on the handrails, use the chip brush to back brush the second coat while it's still wet. Now comes the hardest part: Allow the finish coat to dry for at least 24 hours before walking on it, and four days before placing any furniture. Oh, and don't let it rain for 48 hours after you finish. ■

SEE HOW IT'S DONE
To watch an instructional
version of this project, go to
<http://diyweek.com/step004>

TIP Using a 4-inch roller on the second pass does a nice job of filling any remaining cracks because it fits perfectly between the edges of the boards.



Carefree Cottage

A DESIGNER WITH AN
EYE FOR A FIND GIVES HER
HUMBLE 1920s HOUSE
A CLEAN AND PRETTY LOOK

by Deborah Baldwin
PHOTOGRAPHS BY Mark Lohman
STYLING BY Andrea Caughey



OPPOSITE: With its shabby feel and pastel palette, southwest of Los Angeles, the clipped-gable cottage is a haven for designer Lizzie McGuire

THIS PAGE: Lizzie has aged the new back porch with oil-washed and distressed paint



ABOVE The cottage came with a 12-60s enamel D Kettle & several other items. Liane added the painted backs and custom cabinets, just 18 inches deep to maximize floor space. An open shelf replaces upper cabinets, which would have "floated" the 6-foot-wide room, she says.

RIGHT Original windows in the 1800s are back. The new back porch, Quincy, Idaho, on the blackboard. Liane started collecting old signs years ago because they were cheaper than artwork. Not another one! Royal Blue and the Acacia planer. David & Albert.

Rattling around is a 14,000-square-foot Tucson McMansion may sound well, but imagine trying to find a car that size—the rags you'd need, the bill for a decent pillow? "I've been hired by people who like all kinds of styles, and I try to design for them," says Liane McGraw, who helped decorate and maintain on behalf of Hollywood designers Brooke Burke and David Charvet. "But I have my own thing going on, which is much more period clean and more casual."

It's not every interior designer whose own home could fit in one of her clients' taste. But Liane, who also runs a cottage-decor shop in Venice, California, is comfortable juggling between bohemian and luxe. "I'm lucky. They're not in work with," she says of clients like actor Josh Broder and jewelry designer Sara Weinstock, "and they're always helpful."

Probably the well-heeled residents of Malibu find it refreshing to step into a place with the owner's name of Tina Maxwell & Dandelion and the down-to-earth appeal of a farm stand. Faded signs, chippy-slate-style dreams, and "driftwood" tables mingle



floor plan

Before the redo, this 14,000-square-foot six-story cottage was nothing through-line renovation but still a handsome kitchen and bath and fully wired and plumbing. Along with before and after, the homeowners built a new kitchen and bath and added a 140-square-foot to enlarge the bathroom and put in a new kitchen sink that doubles as a dining room.



SHOP THIS STYLE
To find furnishings, consider those used in this house go to www.etsy.com/shop/linemcgraw

with other residents of secondhand chic. "I like to think I was an unwitting pioneer," Liane says of a now ubiquitous look the calls urban farmhouse. "But for me it was completely personal—I couldn't afford to buy all new things, so I copied and requested before it was fashionable and everyone else was doing it."

Just cast an eye around the 1920s cottage she shares with her private-chef boyfriend, Josh the Farmer, and their menagerie of dogs and chickens. Located in low-key Inglewood, California—at the time the house was built, the world's chandeliers

farming capital—provides an ideal backdrop for Liane's rotating collection of vintage-inspired chairs, tables, and quirky pillows.

When they bought it, the little house was hardly big enough for two. "You couldn't say it had good bones—the previous owner had begun, then expanded, a whole vintage redo, leaving walls closed about but not replaced. You couldn't even say it had hidden charm. The wiring appeared to be authentic Edison-bulbs and the plumbing wasn't much prouder. What the house had was outdoor space, with shade trees and enough room for a garden—and

ABOVE LEFT Liane enjoys a new minimalist dress. She's working with her staff on creating the new and space for the house and kitchen. It will have a new kitchen, a new bathroom, and a new living room. Calling Sign: Liane McGraw. Photos: Liane McGraw. Photos: Liane McGraw.



ABOVE: Little like to rotate furnishings between her cottage and the house—about once the sun moves by 180 degrees the old comes out and it all sits around after vintage prize needs. The festive sign, layered on historic shutters, came from a store near Nashville, a favorite stop-off during cross-country bicycling jaunts.

RIGHT: Group curtains hang high, making the living room's French doors a focal point. *Sign: City Farmhouse. Sofa, chair and ottoman: Turnaboutweck. Decoupage*

garden parties. It was also near Lizzie's mom, too, a cottage, where she and Jonathan, plus two dogs and two cats, had been living in a "hut" attached to the garage while trying to find a real home they could afford.

"So one day I was driving through the neighbor hood and saw the house," Lizzie recalls. "A lady was putting a sign in the yard, and I pulled over."

The sale almost didn't go through—the 11th hour the owner, worried that she wasn't asking enough, threatened to renege. But the couple persisted and were soon standing in the entrance of a half-acre rube, gaudier, but their real stop.

Enter Lizzie's dad, Wilfred, at the time an established architect living in a historic colonial house, in Fort Greene, New York. Already impressed by his daughter's decision to hang out a shingle—which he business plan—on Venice's then busy Abbot Kinney Boulevard, he called his eyes at her house fully. Then he got to work, drawing up plans for a floor layout and what Lizzie calls her first Cape-style back porch.



Eastward endeavoring: Lizzie and Jonathan found a lot of French furniture, and many builders added the layered look of the bath. But a little Pure White (darkwood enamel), later, American Standard.

She thought about but ruled against adding a second story—right now, there's just an empty attic, accessible only by ladder—and she also turned a new window, deciding instead to scrape down the original, which she gives for their uniqueness.

Jonathan proved to be an accessible client partner, however, for example, on Lizzie's request to restore the 1940s stove that came with the place. ("He wanted a Wolf," she confesses.) He even agreed to bring his extra pens and pens to the racks of the garage—near the fridge. So far Lizzie needed the fridge's assigned parking space to the kitchen for a beloved hatch. "It's very rustic and very humble," she says of the arrangement.

"We never owned a dishwasher, and when my brother came to see me, he's like, 'What's the refrigerator?' It's right in the garage, two days from the porch! It was just right to my kitchen."

Working with general contractor Sam Blodgett, the couple replaced pipes, wiring, and fixtures, moved outdoor walls, and built a new kitchen and



5 steps to cottage style

INTERIOR DESIGNER LIZZIE McRAW'S ACQUIRED WISDOM: DISTILLED

■ **Layer with white.** Two or three shades throughout can result in a finished look and a sense of spaciousness while providing a cohesive backdrop for eclectic furnishings, as seen in the kitchen and porch areas above.

■ **Add space overhead.** Lizzie raised the ceiling about 18 inches by raising the joists above two second-story rooms to draw the eye up and create a larger and better feel.

■ **Salvage the chairs.** After replacing paint, the green chairs were the only piece Lizzie paid to restore; the original painted blue and used paint to preserve the original French style. "They're made," she says of the floors, "but they looked dated. Painting them white put them in a fresh look."

■ **Unity with accessories.** Three patterned armchairs, a sideboard, and a small table can inject color and personality into a room and can be easily swapped out for a more cohesive look.

■ **Edit your finds.** "I believe in everything clutter," Lizzie says. "But at the same time you should know where things are. A happy home is a happy home with too many things occasionally need a nudge, she says, but that's what she's there for. 'It's like a third helping you choose the right light!'"



A painted folding screen acts like a headboard to a heavy mix of headboard, exposed beams, and a painted screen. Acquired for part of the bulk purchase from a Los Angeles dealer, it's said to have come from the Hollywood home of actor Gene Kelly.



both. A small forced-air system supplies heat, with all those shade trees and the occasional breeze, the couple doesn't really crave air conditioning.

The crew at the store's workshop in downtown L.A. made the cabinets and some of the furniture. Laine regularly sweeps in and out pieces she has grabbed while traveling on a tour bus with her brother, country singer Scott Patrick McCreary, whose label she helps manage. She thinks nothing of making the driver to break for her going to Antique City in Walnut, Iowa, is a regular hunting ground.

Some things you find during cross-country trips with her chief troublemaker, Jonathan, who helpfully pulls over and loads up the truck knowing that some items will never make it to the store, to a house not right away.

"Jonathan wants you to know I changed the house all the time, and he can't find anything," Laine joked. "He'd want you to know I changed the house all the time, and he can't find anything."

Laine kept the conversation going even after departing at a leather factory, where she fielded questions while negotiating a price on behalf of a well-heeled client. "An expensive proposition,"



she said of the client's keen desire for well-toned beds for upholstery. "I personally prefer less."

In fact, her home and place of business are adventures in far-flung materials like linen, cotton, and salvaged wood—these over kind of stores symbolize a certain aesthetic like her. Her house, based in a mere cottage left standing a real glossy new house, has even spawned a head carried by other stores eager to market urban farmhouse chic.

Laine credits her dad, who died in 2008, for her start. "I was very lucky, my design aesthetic and my ability to come from him," she says, adding, "I learned from him early on that knowledge is nothing unless you can put it to practical use"—turning a cracked cottage into a stylish showroom included. ■

ABOVE: Laine and her springer spaniel, Rafe, sit on a porch with a large, ornate, light-colored wooden headboard. Rafe's owner says he'll be the next of the house.

ABOVE: Laine and her springer spaniel, Rafe, sit on a porch with a large, ornate, light-colored wooden headboard. Rafe's owner says he'll be the next of the house.



GARDEN ORNAMENTS

Here's how landscape designer Wesley Rouse creates showstopping moments in his home garden using a variety of decorative accents

By Kate Karem • Photographs by Matthew Scamson • Produced by Tovah Marlin

a gate can create mystery

The sprawling Connecticut garden of landscape designer Wesley Rouse is a series of rooms with walls, hallways, and sometimes even a major pinch of wick. He keeps each room distinct from the next by using structures like this gate to separate them. Its only purpose is to literally stop you for a moment as you transition from the bright, landscaped areas of his garden into the dimly lit, misty woods beyond. Along this idea into your own garden moment for its sake, by closing off a section behind a screen, a lattice wall, or even a pair of tall curtains hung from a tree.





silver and gray ground a white border

Garden designers often layer plants with silvery leaves into white flowering beds for much-needed contrast! Flouregates and better adding a small tree statue in a metallic blue-gray to this white and silver border. Here, spears of white Culver root (*Veronicastrum virginicum*), Snowhill hydrangeas, and white shrubs stand out against a backdrop of foliage in various shades of green, silver, and blue.

sculptural pieces surprise and delight

Rousselle's garden is a mix of stone, and concrete ornaments, including a large, dark, abstract sculpture of a figure in a dynamic pose, a large, light-colored, abstract sculpture of a figure in a dynamic pose, and a large, light-colored, abstract sculpture of a figure in a dynamic pose.

1. find the right scale

Most people choose garden ornaments that are too small for their site. Rousselle suggests cutting a piece of cardboard to the height and width of a piece and placing it in different locations until you find the perfect spot. He chose this dark bronze statue for its brooding pose, which blended into a study garden bed filled with dwarf oaks, holly, and heptacod.

2. add falling water

Fountains look best with negative space around them to spotlight their shape. Rousselle has a long border to provide a three-dimensional focal point and add height and mass—and for the sound which draws visitors like bees to honey. The tiered cast-iron fountain, a contemporary piece of the garden, is in the background and its reddish hue echoes the plum pinks behind it.

3. consider a classic

If you don't love silver and blue, you might want to add a touch of classic to your garden. Try a small, white, classical-style statue of a figure in a dynamic pose, a large, light-colored, abstract sculpture of a figure in a dynamic pose, and a large, light-colored, abstract sculpture of a figure in a dynamic pose.

4. create contrast

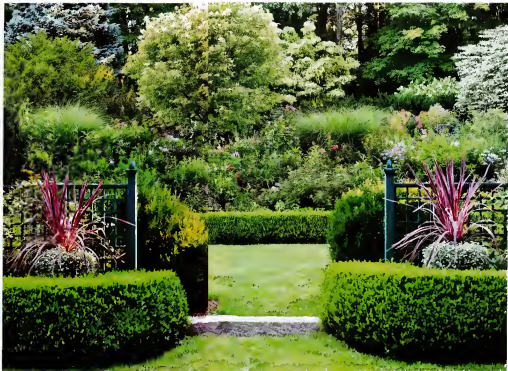
Stark contrasts are especially striking when they contrast with their surroundings. In this case, the smooth surface and delicate look of the concrete medallion with the rough, woody texture of nearby trees.

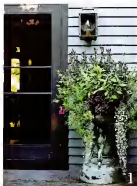


fence panels and posts can frame a view

Open lattice panels frame a vista of the formal garden entrance in the distance. Their airy structure and deep blue hue create enclosure without obscuring the view. Low boxwood hedges also lead to the entry, their curving shapes offering a soft counterpart to the geometry of the wood panels. In another bit of sleight of hand, Rouseletting altered this scene by raising the grade by about a foot, slowly signaling the transition from one area in the garden to another. Fronting the lattice an array of pots planted with a dramatic combination of sword-leaved Pele Spoke phormium, shimmering Silver Falls dichondra and frothy 'Mourning Light' maiden grass in subtle colors.

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1



2



potted gardens focus the eye

Rosie uses planted containers throughout her garden to introduce a new mood, define a transition, and highlight architectural details. Follow her lead and keep the palette simple—but be fearless with form.

1. make an entrance

The front door is a great place to showcase a spectacular container, such as this one with a swan figure pedestal. Rosie chose this pot and the tall plantings to balance the height of the door and fill the space between it and the nearby window. Cascading 'Silver Falls' dichroa and 'Cakile' cress between a pale and a darker shade of light blue fit the rich colors of compact 'Autumn Glow' hebe and burgundy yucca.

2. punctuate a pathway

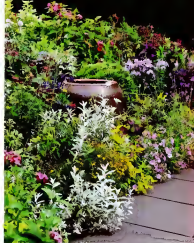
"Digger is better," is Rosie's advice when selecting a pot: not just for creating pleasing scale but also to give plants plenty of room to stretch their roots and grow. As a general rule, the pot should be about one-third to one-half the height of the planting at maturity. Here, Rosie combines dramatically spiky New Zealand flax with lush, coral, and sweet viburnum.

3. raise it up

Dragging a container and placing it where visitors might brush past brings its vibrant mood closer and shapes its focus. Here, a rustic stacked stone wall provides a perfect shelf for a rectangular planter overflowing with California cistus and angelonia.

4. round out a corner

Rosie exited the horizontal line of the deck-moulded lamp post and "insead" the dark corner by placing a container in front of it. 'Antial' pink 'Rice de Port' mandarin scribbles up the post. Morning glory, cistus adds volume, and pink Aquilegia and 'Snow Pie' cistus spiky cascade over the pot edges.



a shapely urn breaks up a border

Spectacular garden borders can be almost overwhelming, with so much going on that you're overwhelmed. At the other end of the spectrum, a border might be lots of bare earth with a few new plants in need of time to fill in. In both instances, a wedged-in container works magic. It can interrupt the eye as it scans the rows to say, "Stop, look at this!" or serve as a colorful focal point that dots the rows in color spots. When adding a container to a border, place it sparingly (one or two inches of crushed gravel on top of soil that's been tamped down) to ensure proper drainage and help prevent the pot from sinking. Here, Rosie suggested an urn, glazed in earthy colors that complement the nearby plants' rich reds and purples.

home wreckers

Bad homeowner habits could be undermining your house. Here's how to nip serial "oopses" in the bud—and how to make them right



YOUR HOME MEANS THE WORLD TO YOU—of course you intend to do right by it, from the front door to the wood floors to the walls, the roof, the porch, and yes, the septic system. But sometimes you may (unwittingly) get it wrong, and then compound any potential damage you inflict by repeating your mistake again... and again. Luckily, we're here to help. Coming up: our list of common ways even the most well-intentioned homeowners habitually hurt their houses, with advice on how to do better from here on.

by **Ed Vuglics** Illustrations by **Ross MacDonald**





1 Maxing out closet rods

Hanging too many coats on that pole can not only cause it to bend or break—ruining a glimpse of the floor—it may also strain mounting hardware installed with under-size anchors, setting off the chain of your downfall.

INSTEAD: Only use steel rods and metal supports. The pole's length should be just a inch less than the span between the rod supports for maximum contact. Install additional brackets every 40 inches to stabilize a long rod. Swinging into wall studs is best, but if it's not possible, secure hardware to a length of 1-4 that spans studs on both sides of the closet.

2 Slamming the front door

Repeatedly slamming a hefty entry door pushes its joints out of alignment. Over time, the mechanism can force the door from the opening, causing the storm door to slam into your junk to separate and leaving an exterior gap where moisture and cold air can infiltrate.

INSTEAD: Replace existing hinges with self-closing versions. "There can be no adjustment to the door closes solely without slamming," says Tim Old House general contractor Tom Silva. On heavy wood doors, replace all three hinges, lightweight steel doors may need to have only one or two upgraded.

3 Letting outdoor rugs lie

Leaving a rug right by the summer's bare feet, outdoor rugs with rubber or vinyl backings shouldn't be left in place; they trap water and create mildew and mold, leading to spotty porch or deck planks, not to mention creepy-crawlies.

INSTEAD: Choose an open-weave rug that allows moisture to evaporate and air to circulate. To clean your outdoor floor covering, hose gently with a hose and hang over a railing until fully dry.

4 Neglecting gutters

When water flowing off the roof can't move through gutter troughs thanks to

fallen leaves, pine needles, and branches, it dumps along the fascia and, where it can seep into roof cracks and corners. **INSTEAD:** Make sure to clean gutters before spring rains, checking once the winter's snow and ice haven't pulled them away from the fascia. After cleaning, and while you still have the ladder out, install mesh gutter guards to help speed up your next degunking.

5 Walking on the roof

It's true that keeping gutters clear and spotting roof damage, only facilitates pricey repairs, but stepping onto the shingles is risky for any DIYer. It can not only damage roofing but will also void the manufacturer's warranty.

INSTEAD: Clean gutters from a ladder with a stabilizer bar to protect the trough's thin gauge metal. Check for worn or missing shingles using binoculars while standing safely on the ground.

6 Flushing all these "flushable" wipes

The rise in popularity of premoistened, so-called flushable bathroom wipes is the root cause of many a home (and municipal) plumbing problem. Once down the drain, the nonwoven fabric combs with grease and other materials, causing clogs, which are clogs that aren't really clogs.

INSTEAD: Place a covered trash bin in the bathroom for used disposals or put sticks to good use: paper TP, which biodegrades like lightning by comparison.

7 Storing too much stuff under a porch or deck

Making use of the space under a wood deck or a porch floor makes sense, but packing in outdoor furniture, a ladder, the grill, and more during the off-season can lead to mold, rot, trapping moisture and building up enough heat to warp the boards.

INSTEAD: Leave at least 12 inches of open space beneath the joists to allow air to move in and out. And never put toxic food—yes, firewood—under there.

8 Building fires too big

A house fire shouldn't look like a blazing bonfire, the more it roars, the more likely it is to do damage. "Burning wrapping paper or gift boxes can cause a fire to jump from 300°F to 1,700°F," says chemistry expert Mark Schaub. Those high temps can buckle a metal flange or crack an attic of terra-cotta.

INSTEAD: Keep fires paper-free and small enough to cover the flame tips. Schaub likes to start fires with a log across the back of the grate, another across, and a fire start in back in the middle. Light the back, and in some sit on chairs, not a third piece of

wood diagonally across the first two. If you've had fireplace or chimney work done during the warmer months, you need to take particular care. Use one log at a time for the first four burns, to allow the new masonry to cure.

10 Storing stuff in an over-the-shower caddy

Your morning shave may need more handy places for shampoo and body-wash bottles, but a showerhead storage unit loaded with containers will stress the checked connection behind the tiled wall, potentially causing leaks.

INSTEAD: Store shampoo bottles on the shower floor or tub surround. For lighter stuff, try shelves that attach with suction cups. Get a whole family's worth of bottled soaps? Stick them on an over-the-shower-door caddy, which can hold about 10 pounds.

11 Tossing bleach tablets in the toilet tank

Those handy blue tablet clog blockers will keep the water fresh and the bowl clean—and cause premature hardening or leakage at the flapper valve and other rubber and plastic parts.

INSTEAD: Go old-school with a toilet brush and use some cold dose of bleach, or use a flush-by-flush product that puts the cleaner in the bowl, not the tank.

12 Stranding circuits

With a "click, click" you might get the toaster toasting, toasters again, but repeatedly resetting fuses and tripping breakers is a pain. Too many clicks can cause the safety switch to wear out, increasing the risk of an electrical fire.

INSTEAD: Understand the breaker by running power to each circuit. "Debonded," meaning loose connection, overheats and misfires, and air conductors can often overheat outlets," says master electrician Scott Casati. He suggests having an electrician replace a breaker that's tripped five times, and, for a long-term fix, upgrading the entire circuit to handle a higher load.

13 Scrubbing grout with vinegar

If you, poor pig of Homer, and that old toothbrush are reinforcing regularly with the bathroom grout, look out. Traditional white grout is a seal-and-stain mix, that constant in an alkaline environment and the acid in vinegar turns it yellow and crumbly.

INSTEAD: Choose a traditional alkaline hard-surface cleaner, like Simple Green, or an oxygen-bleach-based one. Always rinse well, and to really lift dirt and out, try a few passes of your entry wax to dry it.



9 Extension cords everywhere

Extension cords are temporary helpers, not the cure for your old-house lack of outlet holes. Pinned on the Consumer Product Safety Commission's Substantiated Hazard List in 2008, some cord—especially the so-called dollar-store variety—grew just as fast as the electrical and fire risk.

INSTEAD: Throw away old extension cords and say no more plugs, split strands, or cheap-looking construction. Don't run cords under rugs or around furniture, as they can overheat or crack, sparking danger. Use the right cord for the job: a 16-gauge cord to power small household appliances, such as a fan, that draw up to 15 amps; a 14-gauge cord for large power loads, like a table saw, that use up to 20 amps; a 12-gauge cord for items that need 20 amps, such as an air compressor. And consider upgrading to grounded receptacles where you need them most.

14 | Closing vents

Shutting the bottom or grille to force conditioned air into the main room might help control the temp in a room, but it causes a pressure imbalance on the ducts that can make the furnace work harder or the cooling coil freeze over.

INSTEAD: Hire an HVAC contractor to install intake dampers on the main runs of your ductwork. Use them seasonally to force cooler air to the second floor in summer and warmer air to the ground floor in winter.

15 | Mislabeling locks

Aqua-Lock's with an all-purpose spray will improve the movement of most stainless locks, but it won't provide long-term lubrication, which is why your rough-turning key problem always seems to return.

INSTEAD: Your handy can of multi-lube can quickly answer for cleaning, lubricating, and changing contamination from inside the lock, but it's only the first step. After loosening a crumbly cylinder, latch, or dead bolt, use a silicone spray or a sprays of graphite powder for lasting lubrication. Never apply household oil, which attracts dirt and can lead to an even greater gunk issue.

16 | Not grounding a "cheater" plug

Those orange or gray three-prong-two-prong adapters are handy when only one-size outlets are available, but using them haphazardly by bending or breaking off the grounding tab results in an ungrounded connection and raises the danger of shocks or fire.

INSTEAD: Make sure that your two-prong cord is in a grounded case. A three-wire adapter's wire or metal tab should be connected to the screw in the outlet's cover plate to ground the plug. Long term, consider installing three-prong outlets, housewires, or wiring outlets.

17 | Using drywall screws for everything

You risk driving upper cabinets open,

disturbing, or even heavy mirrors come crashing down if they are hung with fasteners that are too brittle. Hardened-steel drywall screws break under heavy loads where other screws flex.

INSTEAD: Keep a variety of wood, cabinet, and deck screws on hand so that you're always prepared with the right fastener for the job. Wall cabinets will have ample holding power if you drive two 26-inch (you guessed it) cabinet screws, with washers, through cabinet backs and into wall studs—never, ever into drywall alone.

18 | Hanging dry cleaning on a doorknob

Four years of pants and eight shirts might weigh 35 pounds. Hooking that load of dry cleaning on a door handle every week

can strain the knob and even the hinges, pulling the door out of alignment.

INSTEAD: Walk directly to a closet upon arriving. Open door and hang dry cleaning on properly mounted closet rod (see No. 1). Repeat. Entry walk.

20 | Overdoing drain cleaner

Serial doses of clog-dissolving liquids or crystals containing sulfuric or hydrochloric acid or lye—even those that say "septic safe"—can wipe out the essential bacteria that break down waste as a healthy septic system.

INSTEAD: As a first line of attack against a clogged drain, flush with boiling water. For stubborn logs, a routine mechanical clearing with a closet auger works a lot less damaging than those drain-clearing

chemicals, which should be used only if necessary, and then only sparingly.

21 | Letting receptacles rock

Electrical outlets can loosen over time, especially heavily used ones. But those on a kitchen backsplash or where you usually plug in the vacuum. That wobble can cause the wires to pull out, increasing the chances of arcing—and fire.

INSTEAD: Turn off the power to any loose outlet at the electrical panel. Use screw and remove the outlet cover, tighten loose wires, and use plastic shims to stabilize the receptacle's "nest" before putting the plate back on.

22 | Stressing trusses

A 4-by-8 foot sheet of 5/8-inch plywood weighs 71 pounds. Stacking a few of them, along with heavy tools, weed-eater, scraper, and a bundle of shingles up in that open space above your head can tax garage and attic trusses, causing them to bow—or maybe collapse. Even a traditionally loaded roof, which is stronger, can fail if overloaded above the joists.

INSTEAD: Store heavy materials where they won't need to defy gravity, leaving plywood against a garage wall in one space-saving solution. Take advantage of the dead space in centers by installing a triangle shelf to keep things like roofing shingles flat. To make use, half a row of 2x6 joists to the wall, then screw on a 16-inch-thick plywood pin-disk wedge. Centered post trusses could be compromised! A structural engineer can tell for sure. Then Silva suggests storing shingles on a weakened ridge beam from an eave down along a supported wood.

23 | Pointing over rust

Slapping a coat of paint over rust that still shows signs of rust is a temporary

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24 Fertilizer overspray

We know. You're just trying to feed your lawn's every last hungry blade. But fertilizers that contain sulfates or ammonias can chemically react with the cement in concrete, creating a walkway, damaging a driveway, and even causing cracks in your home's foundations.

INSTEAD: Stick to fertilizers with synthetic urea as their nitrogen source—unless ammonium nitrate, it won't damage concrete. If your product contains urea, keep granules at least 6 inches from concrete surfaces. And use a broom, not a hose, to disperse pellets, since water activates the harmful compounds.

cover, but not a fix. The iron oxide will prevent the new paint from grabbing hold, to recoat more than later the bond will fail and flaking will begin.

INSTEAD: To properly coat rusty mill-work and metal furniture, use a scraper to remove surface corrosion and peeling paint, feathering paint edges with 100-grit sandpaper. Treat spots with a rust primer before coating the whole thing with direct-to-metal (DTM) paint, a special acrylic formulation.

25 | Using the provided wall anchors

Assuming you can rely on those expand-

ing blue plugs that come in the package with the picture hanger or window shade or towel bar just doesn't cut it. These ubiquitous shields are designed for dense masonry wall plaster where they can grab some holes in the material, if you're sinking them into drywall, which is more likely, the material around them will eventually crumble.

INSTEAD: Drywall calls for an anchor that can grab the thin wallboard and hold a screw. Choose a threaded anchor and an appropriate fastener that is twice as long as the material is thick. Toggle bolts are another good choice and can nearly as concrete as they look. ●



19 Mixing paint too vigorously

Taking a can of paint back to the store for a sip on the shaker is fine. Stirring paint with a drill attachment, or even a whisk by hand? Not recommended. "You'll create air bubbles that stay in the paint and leave thin spots in the finish," says John Callahan of the Paint Quality Institute. "Overmixing also creates grit," he adds, "by making paint molecules clump together."

INSTEAD: Stir slowly and gently with a regular old wood paint-stirring stick. You'll know you're done when there are no solids at the bottom of the can and as even, uniform stream of paint dribbles off the stirrer.

ALL
ABOUT

Garden Fountains

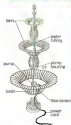
Adding the pleasing sights and sounds of flowing water to your backyard can transform it into a relaxing retreat from workday stress or the yappy dog next door. BY SAL VADUKA

FEW THINGS SOOTHE like running water. If you don't happen to have a meandering stream in your yard, there's another way to harness water's therapeutic benefits: a garden fountain. It provides the same coloring qualities and can dramatically lift the look of your landscape. Styles run from classical tiered towers to contemporary orbs, and a fountain's design speaks to more than aesthetics; the architect determines how the water flows and the music it creates, from a splashing that draws out street noise to a bubbling that provides a subtle background score to your conversation.

On the flip side, the way the water moves and catches light has a lot to do with the fountain's visual appeal. Water dancing off a colorful, textured urn is more playful than a forceful stream pouring from basin to basin. You pick a fountain for its looks, but knowing the options in materials can streamline the search. Glass ceramics come in colors that pop, lightweight fiberglass can be elaborately shaped, cast concrete looks just like stone. In any case, you'll want to head to the garden center to see them in person. That is, right after you read everything you need to know on these pages.

ANATOMY OF A FOUNTAIN

A pump hidden in the middle of this classic tiered fountain circulates the water, sending it through the tubing to the top, where it cascades into a new flow each time.



VITALS

WHAT'S IT COST?

Fixed \$250 for a small, 20-foot-tall, two-tier fiberglass fountain and pump, or \$800 for a cast-concrete version that size. As a rule, 7-foot or smaller concrete can easily run up to \$2,000, not including delivery.

HOW MUCH MAINTENANCE?

Keep the fountain filled with water from the season to the pump doesn't burn out. Before winter, drain the basin to prevent water from freezing and cracking the structure.



PRO OR DIY?

For a starter with no plumbing or masonry background, your own, or buy a kit and set it up yourself—unless the fountain is too heavy. Calligraphy is too heavy to move with over 250 pounds.

SAFETY

For a starter with no plumbing or masonry background, your own, or buy a kit and set it up yourself—unless the fountain is too heavy. Calligraphy is too heavy to move with over 250 pounds.

On a note about safety: If you're a parent and a soccer ball, this tiered fountain gets pretty high and stays wet.

Falling water, five ways

The path water takes down the fountain helps set the tone of the feature, not to mention the volume level and how often you'll have to refill it

1> RUNNING A sheet of water slips down the surface of an object, such as an urn, in a reservoir that holds enough water to keep the fountain going (in porcelain fountains). Smooth surfaces make the water sound like a running garden hose, while something textured disrupts the flow, creating more of a trickling sound. Water clinging to the side of the fountain is not easily lost to splashing, but that this layer evaporates quickly on hot days, so frequent refilling may be required.



2> DUBBLING A bubble of air is being gently drawn in the surface of the water, providing a primarily sound experience—and a strong magnet for birds and water flies. Because the water doesn't bubble down the side, bubblers are probably the quietest fountains. They use very little water to splashing or even, mimicking gurgling rills.



3> RAINING Because of droplets splashing through holes, creating like a heated surface into a pool of water in a hole-filled basin inside the opposite pattern of a rain shower. The faster the structure and the deeper the pool, the louder the shower. A lot of water splashes and splatters around away from the fountain, creating a splashy sound frequently.

4> POURING Concentrated streams of water gushing from one level to the next into open pools make a special sound, like that of a pot filled—distracting for some, desirable for others. Leaping/gushing water for birds leaves the water vulnerable to wind gusts, so maintaining the fountain is a lot of work.

5> CASCADING Water falling over the top pool and into subsequent tiers produces a symphony of splashing that can mask unwanted noise. This fountain also needs lots of refilling more often than the other configurations save for the rain fountain. The pump's size determines how the fountain's volume and splashing level, but the point is this style isn't known for quietude.

TIP Fountain too loud? Try adding a layer of river rocks to the basin. They'll soften the crash of the water while reducing the distance the water falls.



THE BIG PICTURE: WHERE TO PUT YOUR FOUNTAIN

There's a fountain for every kind of yard, but selecting the right spot calls for balancing its size and shape with the style of your garden



THE ACCENT Tuckerside: A fountain is a focal point, so it's best to place it in a corner of the yard or a window with a view. Place a traditional fountain in a formal garden, but a modern fountain in a casual garden. Keep it away from a lot of mechanical noise—like a car engine, say—but might even serve as a soothing sound.



THE CENTERPIECE As the fountain is the focal point of a garden, place it in a central location, such as a window with a view. Place a traditional fountain in a formal garden, but a modern fountain in a casual garden. Keep it away from a lot of mechanical noise—like a car engine, say—but might even serve as a soothing sound.



THE DESTINATION Use a fountain as the focal point of a garden, place it in a corner of the yard. Encourage a sense of discovery with a path that can be seen or heard from a distance, and create a winding path to its location. Complete the scene with plants and containers and a view of you have a relaxing little landscape.

Prep steps

Before you haul your new fountain home from the garden center, you need to prepare the spot you've picked.



Most people keep a pump in a hole in the yard. Another option: install a water valve, which lets you turn on or off the pump without having to refill it.

DIG A FOOTING Water won't flow properly from a fountain so that isn't level, and you can't expect it to stay that way if you place it on a patch of dirt. First, the base under a fountain like a rain pump. Pick a mix of 3-inch washed stone and stone dust in layers top with a flat stone or paver if the pot isn't flat. A narrow fountain.

RUN ELECTRICAL Hire an electrician to install a dedicated 110-volt line to a protected GFCI outlet. To determine the outlet's location, subtract about 4 feet from the pump cord's length to leave ample slack to install the pump.

PLANT FOR WATER How often you need to refill a fountain depends on its size, the way water moves over it, and heat and humidity. Quick access to a spigot makes a sometimes daily check easier.



SCREEN OUT NOISE

To help mask the constant hum of a neighbor's air conditioner or the rumble of street traffic, situate the fountain between your main seating area and the offensive noise. Place quieter fountains, like these urns, about 6 feet from where guests gather.

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Ask

THIS OLD HOUSE

INSIDE
HOT-AND-COLD WALL SPIGOTS/STEEP SLOPES
/RUSTY LINTELS/MOLDY CAULK/MORE

Q What should I look for
in a garden trowel?

—JENNIFER WILLIAMS
MONTICELLO, VA

A Durability and comfort should be
at the top of the list. A trowel with
a forged one-piece blade and
tang, like the one at top left, will
stand up better to vigorous prying
and digging than the colorful
stamped-steel ones also shown
here. Add you'll get a much better
grip on a bare-wood handle than
on one of painted metal.

—CHRISTOPHER

PHOTOGRAPHY: BRUCE ANGLER

43

tips, tricks, and
answers to
your home-
improvement
questions

PHOTO: BRUCE ANGLER FOR FORTUNE.COM

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experts



TOM SILVA
General Contractor

NORM ABRAM
Master Carpenter

RICHARD TRETHEWEY
Plumbing and Heating
Expert

ROGER COOK
Landscape Contractor

KEVIN O'CONNOR
Tool

I'd like to get warm water outside to bathe my dogs and wash my cars. What's the best way to do that?

—JOSEPH M. RITCHIE, NEW YORK

RICHARD TRETHEWEY REPLIES: I think I have the perfect solution for you: a hot-and-cold wall faucet. You'll probably like using it fairly often in the winter, so a frostproof version is a must; the valves actually shut off the water inside the house, so there's no danger of the faucet freezing and cracking.

Installing one is fairly simple. Most people take off the existing spigot and run its line to supply cold water for the new faucet. Then they install a new hot-water line next to it. To do that, you'll need a tubing cutter, a hole saw, to drill through the siding and sheathing; enough tubing to reach an existing hot-water line; and a soldering kit or no-solder fittings like those made by SharkBite (sharkbite.com). Use a silicone sealant to keep water from getting behind the faucet, and make sure to add a dedicated shut-off valve inside the house for the new hot-water line, in case of any future repairs.

You can watch me install one of these valves at thisoldhouse.com/exp10313.

Richard Trethewey attaches a frost-free outdoor hose faucet that delivers both cold and hot water in a book in the winter when dogs—or cars—need to be warmed.

Flatten out the slope

My backyard is steep; it has a 30- to 40-foot drop over 100 feet, which makes cutting the grass difficult. Can the yard be terraced, or are there other options?

—JOE VESIO, HOLDEN, MASS.

ROGER COOK REPLIES: To make the grade less steep, you'll need some sort of retaining wall to hold back the soil. The magic number for wall height is 4 feet. For anything taller than that, most states require homeowners to put a permit and install a railing on top of the wall to prevent falls. Tall walls also require the equipment and expertise of a contractor and possibly the input of a civil engineer. You get the picture: It will cost you plenty.

But with your steep grade, you'll need a number of 4-foot walls—at least eight, by my count—without a lot of flat ground between them. If you still want to go that route, consider building them out of interlocking concrete blocks, which are more durable than timbers, cheaper than stone, and simple to install.

The easiest solution would be to not build any walls at all. Just give up the grass—and thus the mowing—and plant groundcover and shrubs that won't require much maintenance. You could sell back a few terraces, too, if you want. The combination of plantings and retaining walls would make for a working backyard.

Window finish

All the wood sliders on my 70-year-old living room windows are covered with a water-based stain that seeps onto the glass every time I wash it. Can you recommend a protective finish to seal the stain?

—NANCY KOWALSKI, SAUKTOWN, WIS. VT.

NORM ABRAM REPLIES: For ease of application and good durability, a water-based polyurethane should do the trick. If the stain is still in good shape, mark off the



This serpentine wall made of interlocking concrete blocks. For the look and durability of stone without the highest dollar cost.

glass with painter's tape, clean the stain and the sliders—which are known to maintain—with a dry microfiber cloth, and brush on a thin coat of the poly with a small synthetic-bristle brush.

Apply a maximum of three coats. After the first and second coats dry, scrub them lightly with a 220-grit sanding sponge and wipe up the dust using a rag moistened with denatured alcohol. When the final coat dries, place a broad putty knife against each window as you remove the tape. Without the knife, you risk peeling off some of your carefully applied finish along with the tape.

Rusty lintels

Our brick house has some slightly rusted steel lintels above the windows and exterior doors. The home inspector said we should keep an eye on them, but does that mean they need special maintenance?

—JENNIFER DUFF, HOLISTON, MASS.

KEVIN O'CONNOR REPLIES: I took your question to Brian Tishler, a vice president of engineering services and architectural outreach at the Brick Industry Association. Here's what he had to say:

"Once a lintel is embedded in the wall, almost the only maintenance you can do

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is to make a coat of oil-based paint on its exposed underside. That will help keep the rust at bay.

"The top of the lintel heats up against the brick, so it can't be painted, but that area should be covered with flashing, which should be nailed just above the lintel's exposed edge. If you can't see the flashing, a deeper inspection by an experienced mason—*and* the removal of some bricks—may be justified.

" Likewise, make sure the weep holes in the vertical corner joints above the lintel aren't plugged with caulk or debris and that the lintel's exposed edge hasn't been sealed with caulk. Blocked weep holes and a sealed lintel will trap any water that leaks through the brick veneer, causing a host of problems inside the wall.

"Now, if a lintel does rust to its core, the steel can expand as much as 10 times

as original thickness and actually lift and crack the brick veneer. But rust-jacking takes several decades, even in a corrosive climate like Missouri's. Your lintel will show signs that it needs replacing long before that."

One layer of roofing or two?

Our origin of 20-year-old asphalt roof shingles need to be replaced.

We're considering going with a 40-year warranty. Is it better to apply them over the existing shingles or to tear off the old stuff and start from scratch?

—CLARENCE, MISSOURI

TOM SILVA REPLIES: Laying new shingles over old may save you some money—tearing off a roof does take longer and increases disposal costs. But if you do that,

the new shingles probably won't last as long as you expect.

Here's why: Two layers of asphalt shingles get better than one, and that shortens the life of the top layer. Also, double-up roofing is more vulnerable to impact. Like those from hail, because the bottom layer doesn't provide firm support. For those reasons, most roofing manufacturers void the warranty if their product is installed over old shingles.

As a contractor, I don't like all the extra weight that a top layer adds to the rafters, or the lumpy look of a two-layer roof. Besides, when I strip a roof, it gives me the opportunity to inspect—and, if necessary, repair—the roof deck and any flashing before the new roof goes on. The additional cost of a tear-off is a bargain compared with fixing the damage caused by a two-layer roof that ends up leaking.

Peeling paint—again

Every spring, the paint in one section of our cedar siding bubbles and comes off in sheets, right down to the bare wood. Why is this happening? What can be done about it?

—DAN SHAFER, HUNTINGVALLEY, OHIO

KEVIN O'CONNOR REPLIES: According to painting contractor Mario Guerin, paint—and solid-color stains—peel for one of two reasons: poor adhesion or moisture migrating from behind the siding.

Guerin, owner of Painting in Partnership, in Palmetto, Illinois, says that poor adhesion is usually caused by sloppily prep. "Paint can't adhere well to dirty, old, dried, or sun-damaged surfaces," he says. Here's the fix: "Scrape off all the peeling bits, sand the remaining paint to a feather edge with 60-grit paper, kill the mildew on

the old paint with a mix of 4:1 bleach bleach and dish soap, then rinse thoroughly. When the bare wood is dry, sand off the flopped layer with 40-grit paper, taking care not to dish the siding." To ensure the surface is dust-free, wipe it twice with denatured alcohol and clean rags, followed with a brush-on coat of oil-based primer, such as Cover-Steel (Zinsser-Benjamin Co.). "Wait a hour or two, then brush on the top coat of 100-percent acrylic paint."

The next step, Guerin says, is to watch what happens next spring. If the new paint peels despite all the careful work, moisture migration is the likely culprit. "When the sun warms up the wet siding, the paint pops right off."

Solving a moisture problem is not so easy, he says, in part because it's tough to know where it's coming from. Missing or damaged flashing, a leaking roof, and



This solid-color stain peeled off in sheets, either because it was applied over a dirty, poorly prepared surface or because moisture migrated through the wood from behind the siding.



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Ask THIS OLD HOUSE

water vapor from inside the house due to inadequate ventilation for some of the possible reasons, and they need to be identified and fixed. Also, make sure there's no leaks at joint building in the rooms where the clayboards overlap. If those seams are sealed, cut them open so that moisture has a way to escape without affecting the paint. Pop the siding by scraping and sanding, as above, then check the wood with a moisture meter. If it reads 15 percent or less, it's safe to repoint.

But if the peeling persists even after all those issues have been remedied, Guerra says there's only one surefire way to break the cycle of scraping and repainting: Remove the old siding and start over.

Make sure to cover the sheathing with a membrane, like the ones made by Benjamen Obdyke (benjaminobdyke.com). "A membrane creates a gap behind the siding so that moisture can vent out the top of the wall or down out the bottom. That also lets the back of the siding to dry out if it ever does get wet," Guerra says. It's also important to use siding that's primed on both sides. "Back-priming does a great job of keeping moisture out of the wood. All over ends should be primed too."

Guerra admits that this solution is expensive but says it greatly extends the longevity of the paint job. After you paint the new siding, it shouldn't need another coat for a decade or more.

Q Banish the caulk, spare the tub

How do I remove the nasty silicone caulk around my fiberglass bathtub without ruining the tub's finish?

—SCHEM NAGY VINI MAIL

TOM SILVER REPLIES: This job needs to be done with care. Fiberglass tubs are easily scratched, and you have to get rid of every trace of the silicone caulk because nothing will stick to it, not even new silicone. Start by running two strips of painter's tape around the tub, one below the joint



Tom Silver uses milflex-resistant caulk to seal caulk and two strips of painter's tape whenever heak the joint around a bathtub.

and one above it, to protect the tub's finish. Use a sharp utility knife to cut into the center of the silicone, and carefully cut up to the edge of the caulking. Now grab the brush cut end with needle-nose pliers and try to pull the whole thing out in one piece. If it doesn't come loose, work a razor blade under one edge of the silicone, then another to sever it at a gap. Finally, run every leftover utility knife bit, pull off the tape, and scrub the joint clean, first with WD-40, then with a solution of diluted bleach and detergent, to kill any mildew. Rinse thoroughly.

Once the surface is dry, run two strips of tape again and recaulk. Be sure to use a milflex-resistant acrylic-latex caulkant formulated for bathtubs. It will be easier to replace than silicone, when the time comes. To see how I caulk a tub, go to thisoldhouse.com/asktop1015.

Ask THIS OLD HOUSE

Go to thisoldhouse.com/asktop Or write to: Ask This Old House, This Old House magazine, 135 West 50th Street, New York, NY 10020

Include complete address and daytime phone number. Published questions will be edited for clarity and length and may be reworded to clarify the question. But, because of the volume of mail received, we're unable to reply to unpublished questions.



Norm's tricks of the trade

I just started building my first deck. It looks pretty good so far, except that the ends of the joists don't line up. I measured everything so carefully. What happened?

—KEVIN/SETH PORTLAND, ORE.

A If you've committed a mistake that many people make: cutting the ends of the joists to a set length. But first, only work on designs that are perfectly straight, and they seldom are. To correct this, go back and trim your joists using the following technique. It ensures that the best joint covering the ends of the joists will be square, straight and well.



1) Square a line. Measure out from the house along the first and last joists to the length you want, then mark each one a top edge. Stretch a chalk line between those marks and snap it, leaving a mark on the top edge of each joist. Now take a framing square with its long blade on the joint, and use its short tongue with the chalk line, as shown. Draw a vertical line along the tongue from each mark down the face of each joist.



2) Trim the ends. Using a circular saw, snip through each joist along the vertical outline. Note: If you work from above, as shown, gravity will provide an assist as you make each cut. When the band saw is fastened to the ends of these joists, it will be absolutely straight.

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More great stuff

Of the many new tools, materials, and other home-improvement products that we discover every month, here are the standouts. —HEIDI FORD



Better than sandpaper

Self-Adhesive Ultra-Flexable Sanding Sheets, by 3M
How do you improve sandpaper? By lifting away the paper and bonding the abrasive to a plastic film. These sheets resist clogging, last up to 15 times longer than regular sandpaper, and conform to profiles better than averaging sponge. Perfect for finish and between coats sanding: wet or dry. \$5 for four sheets, 3M.com



Old look, new technology

Fluorescent LED bulbs, by APO
Good things happen when tiny LEDs are squeezed into rods. You get a bulb that stays cool without a bulky heat sink, produces up to 10 times less heat, and has the look and glow of a classic fluorescent bulb. At \$5, well-built shines like a 75-watt incandescent. Available in 4-, 6-, and 7-watt versions. From \$10, a lighting.com

The writing's off the wall

Station Pad dry-erase coating, by Sherwin-Williams
Roll this clear, two-part finish onto any wall surface to create a high-gloss dry-erase board that lets the underlying color show through. Scrabble away when inspiration strikes, then wipe clean. A quartlet with a foam roller covers 50 square feet. \$95, sherwin-williams.com



Whirlpool in a bowl

VertiMax whirlpool toilet, by American Standard
It looks like an ordinary toilet—and you lift the lid to find the plunger of the traditional flush down holes under the rim. A side mount jet creates a vigorous, counterclockwise swirl of water that cleans the bowl two times better than triple-flush toilets. Each flush uses only 1.28 gallons but still achieves the highest score in tests of solid waste removal. \$289, americanstandard.com



Stain without stopping

Revo deck staining tool, by Wagner SprayTech
Deck maintenance comes faster when you don't pause to load a roller. Squeezing the Revo's handle-mounted trigger loads stain from an invisible half-gallon reservoir to a nylon pad and an integral grease brush, so the deck board faces and edges are coated at the same time. \$35, wagner spraytech.com



Short in the tooth

Steel Diamond metal cutting blade, by DeWalt
Most first-time sawblades with carbide teeth for cutting metal. Those tiny teeth are tough enough to chew through steel up to a half-inch thick, so well as cut slot and even rip steel. The blade cuts faster and easier for longer than typical bimetal blade—you'll burn through 20 times less before the one needs replacing. From \$8 per blade, thegreatchang.com

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Save THIS OLD HOUSE

PRICE: Free (must be moved)
LOCATION: United North Carolina
CONTACT: Robert Powell
 919 832 3622 ext. 230

THE HISTORY: Known as Branch Grove, this farmhouse started as a humble Georgian cottage. In the 1840s, wealthy farmer Samuel Branch—part of a well-to-do family that included prominent traders and bankers—a three-time governor—added on the much larger brick-facing Federal structure. The farmhouse has a documented history: It's the birthplace of Alpheus Branch, Samuel's son, who went on to found Branch Banking and Trust (BB&T), one of the nation's largest banks. The house until part of a working farm but has been vacant since the 1970s and now Preservation North Carolina is looking for a buyer.

WHY SAVE IT? This quiet cottage turned refined farmhouse features a blend of Federal and Georgian styles. The simple facade showcases a half-moon Federal portico. Inside, the rooms have tall ceilings and wide plank heart pine floors, wide-boarded paneled woodwork, and wood trim around the nine-over-nine and six-over-six windows.

WHAT IT NEEDS: The Federal portion of the house has lived better than the older Georgian part, which has lost most of its flooring. Electrical and plumbing systems need updating throughout, and you'll have to replace some windows and part of the roof. The house must be moved within 25 miles of its current location. The good news is that suitable lots start at \$2,500 per acre—and with its powerful pedigree and antiques style, Branch Grove is worth the effort. —MARGARET



1. The primary structure's original portico has a classic Federal style frontispiece above the front door.
2. The entrance to the main part of the house is still original and missing only a few balusters.
3. Southern heart pine floors line the well-worn second floor (most of the boards are ripe for restoration).
4. The old mantels, paneled woodwork, broad Federal style woodwork.



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